

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-10 ISO-00 EURE-00 NRC-07 ERDA-07

EPA-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 FEA-01 OES-05

ACDA-10 ERDE-00 OMB-01 NASA-02 NSF-02 CEQ-01 OFA-01

COME-00 EB-07 /135 W

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P 081151Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8229

AMEMBASSY BONN

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 08675

DEPT FOR OES, PASS NRC, ERDA, ACDA, EPA PRIORITY

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TAGS: TGEN, TECH

SUBJECT: THE GREAT NUCLEAR DEBATE

REF: PARIS 00141, PARAS 14 THROUGH 19

SUMMARY: DEBATE ON THE GOVT'S HEAVY COMMITMENT TO

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NUCLEAR POWER IS ONE OF THE LIVELIEST

IN FRANCE TODAY. RATHER THAN PLAY DOWN THE ISSUE, FRENCH GOVT HAS INSTITUTED A THREE-PRONG PROGRAM TO MEET IT HEAD-ON: 1) AN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN, 2) CONSULTATIONS WITH REGIONAL AND LOCAL COUNCILS ON NUCLEAR SITING PLANS, AND 3) A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE. CONSIDERATION BY THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS HAS PROVIDED A SERIES OF FOCI FOR THE MEDIA AND KEPT THE DEBATE AT HIGH PITCH. AT STAKE ARE SEVERAL ISSUES: SAFETY, ENVIRONMENT, POLITICS, IDEOLOGY, AND EVEN SOCIAL VALUES. THOUGH THE GOVT IS GETTING MORE OF A RESPONSE THAN IT BARGAINED FOR, IT SEEMS TO BE IN CONTROL AND WE DOUBT THAT THE RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC DEBATE WILL APPRECIABLY SLOW THE FRENCH NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

1. THE DEPT MAY WONDER WHAT INSPIRED MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH D'ORNANO TO VISIT WASHINGTON THIS WEEK ACCOMPANIED BY 20 JOURNALISTS AND 15 GOVT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE HEAD OF THE FRENCH ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION (CEA) ANDRE GIRAUD; THE ENERGY DELEGATE P. MENTRE; AND NUCLEAR SAFETY CHIEF, JEAN SERVANT. THE ANSWER IS THAT FRANCE IS IN THE MIDST OF A NATIONAL DEBATE ON ITS AMBITIOUS NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM. THIS NUCLEAR DEBATE IS ONE OF THE LIVELIEST, MOST CONTENTIOUS ISSUE IN FRANCE TODAY. SINCE SEPT, MEDIA COVERAGE HAS BEEN HEAVY AND CONTINUOUS. L'EXPRESS, FOR EXAMPLE, REPORTS THAT IT IS RECEIVING MORE LETTERS (3,000 A DAY) THAN ON ANY SUBJECT SINCE THE ALGERIAN WAR.

2. THE GREAT DEBATE BEGINS
SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH IN APRIL 1974, PRESIDENT POMPIDOU CONFIRMED THE GOVT'S PLANS TO ORDER 6,000 MEGAWATTS OF NUCLEAR GENERATING CAPACITY A YEAR. AT THE TIME, THE TOTAL EXISTING NUCLEAR POWER CAPACITY OF FRANCE WAS ONLY ABOUT 2,000 MEGAWATTS, SUPPLYING ABOUT 8 PERCENT OF ELECTRICAL POWER PRODUCTION. FRENCH NUCLEAR PLANNERS HAVE SET AS THEIR 1985 OBJECTIVE THAT NUCLEAR POWER COULD CONSTITUTE 70 PERCENT OF FRENCH ELECTRICAL GENERATION AND OVER 25

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PERCENT OF ENERGY PRODUCTION.

3. STILL CONCERNED WITH THE OIL CRISIS, THE FRENCH PUBLIC ACQUIESCED IN THE DECISION. DURING THE MAY PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, THE NUCLEAR PROGRAM RECEIVED ALMOST NO MENTION, THOUGH GISCARD DID PROMISE TO CREATE A COMMITTEE TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER. HOWEVER, AS THE OIL CRISIS SIMMERED DOWN, CRITICISMS BEGAN TO CROP UP IN THE PARIS PRESS WITH INCREASING REGULARITY.

4. IN JUNE 1974, A FORMER DIRECTEUR DU CABINET
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTER JACQUES BELLE, WARNED
THAT THE PROBLEM OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS, PARTICULARLY SO-CALLED "THERMAL POLLUTION," OF NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS HAD NOT BEEN RESOLVED. LE MONDE COMMENTED, "EVERYTHING HAPPENS AS IF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE POWER STATIONS WERE THE RESERVED DOMAINE OF ELECTRICITE DE FRANCE AND A TABOO SUBJECT--JACQUES BELLE BREAKS THE SILENCE." SOON THEREAFTER, SENATOR MAURICE PIC (SOCIALIST, LA DROME), PROTESTED THE FAILURE OF THE GOVT TO CONSULT THE PEOPLE OR THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ON THE DECISION TO GO NUCLEAR. BY SEPT, IT HAD

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P 081151Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8230

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BECOME CLEAR THAT THE GOVT WAS FACING A NEW PHENOMENON--
A NATIONAL DEBATE ON NUCLEAR ENERGY. UNIONS, POLITICAL
PARTIES, AND PROTEST MOVEMENTS, PARTICULARLY ON THE
LOCAL LEVEL (SEE REFTTEL), HAD TAKEN UP THE ISSUE.

5. RATHER THAN CONTINUING TO DOWNPLAY THE NUCLEAR IS-
SUES, THE GOVT DECIDED TO GO PUBLIC AND STIMULATE THE
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DEBATE IN THE HOPE OF OBTAINING AN EVENTUAL CONSENSUS.
THE THREEFOLD PLAN WAS ADOPTED ON OCT 10: 1) A "VAST"
INFORMATION CAMPAIGN, 2) A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE, NOW
SCHEDULED FOR LATE MAY, AND 3) THE REQUIREMENT TO CON-
SULT REGIONAL AND LOCAL COUNCIL ON EDF'S PROPOSALS FOR
SITING NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS. RESPONSIBILITY FOR
LEADING THE PUBLIC DEBATE WENT TO THE MINISTRY OF
INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH D'ORNANO, WHOSE PORTFOLIO INCLUDED
BOTH THE CEA AND ELECTRICITE DE FRANCE (EDF), THE STATE
ELECTRICAL UTILITY. (PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC APPEARS
TO HAVE DUCKED THE ISSUE, PRESUMABLY IT WAS TOO HOT
TO HANDLE.) ACTUALLY, THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY HAD
FOR A YEAR BEEN MANEUVERING BEHIND THE SCENES TO RAISE
THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. THE FIRST PUBLIC EVIDENCE OF
THIS NEW POLICY OF OPENNESS CAME ON OCT 11 IN A FRONT-
PAGE ARTICLE BY STATE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
GABRIEL PERRONET, WHICH LE MONDE INTRODUCED AS "THE
FIRST TIME THAT AN OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EN-
VIRONMENT TOOK A DETAILED POSITION ON THIS SUB-
JECT.

6. CONSULTATION AT THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS IS
THE MOST INNOVATIVE OF THE GOVT'S THREEFOLD PROGRAM
OF OPENNESS. IT HAS ALSO CAUSED THE MOST STIR.
THE LEADING BUSINESS DAILY, LES ECHOS,
CALLED IT THE "FIRST TIME IN HISTORY THAT THE LOCAL
AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES ARE GOING TO BE ASKED ABOUT
THE SITING OF INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES." EACH SUCH
CONSULTATION HAS RECEIVED HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE PRO-
VIDING PEAKS OF INTEREST IN A DEBATE NOW 8 MONTHS
OLD.

7. SENIOR GOVT OFFICIALS FRANKLY ADMIT THAT THE PUBLIC RESPONSE IS MORE THAN THEY HAD BARGAINED FOR. TO MEET THE UNEXPECTED BARRAGE, THE GOVERNMENT IS STEPPING UP ITS INFORMATION CAMPAIGN. JOURNALISTS IN SMALL GROUPS ARE BEING INVITED FOR LUNCHEON WITH KEY NUCLEAR FIGURES, LIKE ANDRE GIRAUD OF THE CEA. THE GOVT IS URGING TV UNCLASSIFIED

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STATIONS TO CARRY BOTH SIDES OF THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. TRIPS ARE BEING ARRANGED FOR THE PRESS TO NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS AND EVEN TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES. MINISTER D'ORNANO, FOR EXAMPLE, IS TAKING 30 JOURNALISTS ON HIS VISIT TO THE U.S. THE MINISTER FOR THE QUALITY OF LIFE JARROT HAS JUST AGREED TO FINANCE A VISIT IN MAY TO THE U.S. BY 12 ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISTS.

8. THE ISSUES

THE NUCLEAR DEBATE CONCERNS NOT ONE ISSUE BUT SEVERAL. IT IS THE CONFLUENCE OF THESE SEPARATE ISSUES THAT HAS GIVEN THE NUCLEAR DEBATE ITS PARTICULAR CHARACTER AND DYNAMISM:

A) ENVIRONMENTAL: LIKE BELLE AND PERRONET, MOST CRITICS FEEL THAT NOT ENOUGH IS KNOWN ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS TO ALLOW FOR SUCH A HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON NUCLEAR POWER. OTHERS LIKE THE COMMITTEE OF 400, WHICH NOW CLAIMS 1,400 SCIENTISTS AS MEMBERS, UNDER PROF. MARCEL FROISSART, HAVE BEEN MORE VEHEMENT. FROISSART ATTACKED THE GOVT'S INFORMATION ACTIVITIES AS "A CAMPAIGN OF INTOXICATION," AND CALLED ON THE CITIZENRY TO REJECT NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS UNTIL IT HAD A CLEAR IDEA OF THE RISK AND CONSEQUENCES. SIMILARLY, THE FRENCH FEDERATION OF SOCIETIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE, WHICH CLAIMS 300,000 MEMBERS IN 100 ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS FRANCE, HAS CALLED FOR THE SUSPENSION OF THE NUCLEAR PROGRAM UNTIL A LAW IS PREPARED PROTECTING NATURE.

B) SAFETY: OF LATE, NUCLEAR SECURITY HAS BECOME ONE OF THE DOMINANT ISSUES. ARE NUCLEAR REACTORS, PARTICULARLY THE AMERICAN LIGHT WATER DESIGN, SAFE?

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P 081151Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8231

AMEMBASSY BONN

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THE RASMUSSEN SAFETY REPORT PUBLISHED BY THE AEC
RECEIVED MUCH ATTENTION HERE. IN RECENT MONTHS,
TWO SPILLS OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL HAVE FOCUSED PUBLIC
ATTENTION ON THE DANGERS INVOLVED IN TRANSPOR-
TATION. ONE OF THESE, A TRUCK ACCIDENT, WHICH REQUIRED
RESURFACING A ROAD, ATTRACTED A GREAT DEAL OF MEDIA
COVERAGE. MORE RECENTLY, LE MONDE ACCUSED THE CEA OF
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TAKING INADEQUATE MEASURES TO PROTECT ITS LABORATORY STAFF FROM RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION, PROVOKING AN ANGRY RETORT FROM CEA ADMINISTRATOR GIRAUD. (THE DELEGATION A L'INFORMATION NOW ENCOURAGES GOVT OFFICIALS TO RESPOND TO SUCH CRITICISM.)

C) SECURITY: THE FRENCH HAVE NOT BEEN SHELTERED FROM THE WORLD DEBATE ON NUCLEAR SECURITY. FOR EXAMPLE, L'EXPRESS FEATURED A TED TAYLOR INTERVIEW ON HOW TO MAKE AN A-BOMB. THE HIGHLY RESPECTED GENERAL BEAUFRE, SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH, WROTE A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE IN LE FIGARO ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM, RECOMMENDING AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT TO CREATE AN AGENCY FOR CONTROLLING FISSILE MATERIAL ARMED WITH THE RIGHT TO INSPECT ALL NUCLEAR FACILITIES. WHILE THE ISSUE OF WEAPONS PROLIFERATION AND NUCLEAR EXPORTS HAS BEEN MENTIONED, IT HAS NOT GENERATED PUBLIC INTEREST IN WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A DOMESTIC DEBATE.

D) POLITICAL: A CONSENSUS APPEARS TO BE EMERGING THAT THE GOVT ERRED IN NOT CONSULTING WITH THE PUBLIC BEFORE EMBRACING THE NUCLEAR OPTION. ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN NUCLEAR CRITICS, PROF. PHILLIPE LEBRETON, CALLS THE GOVT A "DIRIGIST TECHNOCRACY CAPABLE OF BECOMING AN ELECTRO-FACISM" (THE MOST COLORFUL WORD COINAGE OF THE DEBATE). THE POLITICAL LEFT USES THE GOVT'S FAILURE TO CONSULT AS AN EASY SWITCH TO SWAT THE GOVT. THE SOCIALISTS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE RECOMMENDED MORE INFORMATION AND LONGER CONSULTATION AS WELL AS A SPECIAL AGENCY (RESEMBLING THE U.S.) THE COMMUNISTS GENERALLY APPROVE THE INDUSTRIAL USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY. THEIR ATTACK ON THE CHOICE OF AMERICAN LIGHT WATER REACTORS STRIKES A RESONANT CHORD AMONG THE MORE NATIONALISTIC ELEMENTS AND WITH THE CEA, STILL CHAFING OVER THE ABANDONMENT OF THE FRENCH REACTOR. THE GAULLISTS ARGUE THAT THE NUCLEAR OPTION IS NOW MORE NECESSARY THAN EVER, GIVEN THE ENERGY CRISIS.

E) SOCIETAL: MUCH OF THE CRITICISM IS UNDERLAID WITH AN UNEASINESS WITH MODERN TECHNOLOGY, ITS HUGENESS, AND ITS COMPLEXITY. ARE PARKS OF 4,000 MEGAWATTS UNCLASSIFIED

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NECESSARY? WHY NOT SMALL REACTORS OR CLEAN ALTERNATE TECHNOLOGIES? JACQUES BELLE PLEADS AGAINST "OVER-DIMENSIONALITY," SAYING THAT THE NUCLEAR PARKS ARE BEYOND THE SCOPE, HENCE CONTROL, OF INDUSTRIAL MAN. ALSO, THE FRENCH WORRY THAT THEY MAY BE CONDEMNED TO A GROWTH FOR GROWTH'S SAKE, "UNE CROISSANCE A L'AMERICAINE", THAT SACRIFICES

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR INCREASED PRODUCTION. THUS,
THEY QUESTION WHETHER ALL THIS ELECTRICITY IS NECES-
SARY.

9. GOVERNMENT IN CONTROL
THE GOVT SEEMS TO BE WINNING ITS GAMBLE ON GOING TO
THE PEOPLE, ALTHOUGH IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO JUDGE
WITH CONFIDENCE. THE "SCORE CARD" BASED ON
INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE OFFICIAL COORDINATING
THE GOVT'S INFORMATION PROGRAM INDICATES
THAT ON THE REGIONAL LEVEL, THE ANSWER TO THE NUCLEAR
OPTION IS "OUI, MAIS" (GISCARD'S FAMOUS FORMULATION
OF HIS SUPPORT FOR DE GAULLE).

SCORECARD ON REGIONAL CONSULTATION OF EDF SITING PLANS

FAVORABLE FAVORABLE NOT AGAINST

REGIONAL, ECONOMIC & SOCIAL COUNCILS	4	5	6	0
REGIONAL COUNCILS	5	2	7	1

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P 081151Z APR 75

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LEVEL OF DEPARTMENT

(IN ADDITION, TWO REGIONS WHICH WERE NOT INCLUDED
IN THE SITING HAVE PRONOUNCED THEMSELVES
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IN FAVOR OF NUCLEAR PLANTS IN THEIR AREAS.

10. MUNICIPAL COUNCILS OF TOWNS AFFECTED BY EDF'S
SITING PROPOSALS ARE ALSO BEING CONSULTED. THE MAYOR
OF ONE SUCH MUNICIPALITY DECIDED TO GO BEYOND THE
TOWN COUNCIL AND HOLD A REFERENDUM. FLAMMANVILLE
BECAME A TEST CASE. BOTH THE GOVT AND ENVIRONMENTAL
GROUPS ZEROED IN ON THIS ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED TOWN
IN NORMANDY. HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE MADE SMALL FLAMMAN-
VILLE NATIONALLY KNOWN. THE VOTE CAME ON APRIL 6:
435 "POUR" AND 248 "CONTRE." THE PRO-NUCLEAR FORCES,
HOWEVER, COULD DRAW LITTLE SATISFACTION. THE SAME DAY,
THE INHABITANTS OF PORT-LA-NOUVELLE (AUDE) ON THE
MEDITERRANEAN GAVE A RESOUNDING "NON" (1,250 TO 385)
TO IMPLANTING A NUCLEAR POWER STATION ON THEIR
TERRITORY. AT FLAMMANVILLE, HOPES OF RESTORING THE
AREA'S ECONOMY APPEAR TO HAVE DOMINATED. THE PORT-

LA-NOUVELLE VOTE SWUNG ON FEARS FOR THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT, STIRRED UP BY REPORTS THAT EFFLUENT FROM THE NEAR-BY VANDELLOS NUCLEAR POWER STATION IN SPAIN HAD ELIMINATED FISH OVER AN 8 KILOMETER AREA.

11. WILL THIS EXERCISE IN GOVERNMENTAL OPENNESS AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY BACKFIRE BY SLOWING OR EVEN STOPPING THE GOVT'S NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM? WE DOUBT IT FOR ESSENTIALLY THE SAME REASONS IN JANUARY (REFTEL), THOUGH NOT QUITE SO CONFIDENTLY.. ONE, EDF REQUIRES ONLY ABOUT TEN OF THE 40 SITES NOW BEING CONSIDERED BY THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL COUNCILS (IT COULD EVEN SELECT OTHER POSSIBLE SITES). TWO, THE AVERAGE FRENCHMAN IS WELL AWARE OF FRANCE'S PRECARIOUS ENERGY DEPENDENCE AND IF FRANCE IS TO MAINTAIN ITS GROWTH RATE AND REDUCE ITS ENERGY DEPENDENCIES IT WILL HAVE TO GO NUCLEAR. THREE, IN A TIME OF HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND ELECTORATES WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO PASS UP THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OFFERED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR PLANTS, BOTH IN JOBS AND TAXES.

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